

Joins American Battle Monument Commission Secretary Max Cleland for Announcement, Texas A&M's Center for Heritage Conservation Instrumental in Preservation Efforts

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today joined Secretary, American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) Max Cleland to announce that historic World War II battle site Pointe du Hoc in Normandy, France will be saved for future generations despite previous predictions it would be destroyed by wind and sea erosion.

Pointe du Hoc is the historic battle site where Lt. Col. Earl Rudder and the 2nd Ranger Battalion scaled 100 meter cliffs on D-Day to protect Allied forces from 5 massive 155 millimeter German guns that could have decimated American forces at sea and on Omaha and Utah beaches. Rudder later became President of Texas A&M University, and Pointe du Hoc became not only a historic part of the D-Day invasion and World War II history, but a source of pride for Aggies everywhere.

Congressman Chet Edwards said, “It is a privilege to work with Secretary Cleland and Texas A&M to help save one of the most important military history sites in the world, Pointe du Hoc, where U.S. troops began the liberation of Europe in World War II. It would have been a tragedy for Pointe du Hoc to have been lost for the ages because this hallowed ground is a powerful reminder to the world of America’s service and sacrifice in the defense of

freedom for all mankind.

I want to thank Secretary Cleland and Texas A&M for their leadership. This was a labor of love, and we could not have done this without their dedicated efforts.”

Max Cleland, Secretary, American Battle Monuments Commission said, “Pointe du Hoc is an iconic symbol of American courage and sacrifice. We are grateful to Chet Edwards for his leadership in obtaining the \$6 million appropriation that is enabling us to preserve this historic D-Day battlefield. We all have a responsibility to tell its stories for generations to come.”

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Dr. Robert Warden, Director of the Center for Heritage Conservation at the Texas A&M College of Architecture said, “Because of General Rudder’s leadership both at Pointe du Hoc and Texas A&M it holds a special place in the hearts of all Aggies. We feel privileged to be able to field a team of Texas A&M experts to aid ABMC in efforts to save the Observation Post and its memorial to the brave men of the 2

nd

Ranger Battalion.”

Edwards, an Earl Rudder Award winner in 1974 upon his graduation from Texas A&M continued, “Mrs. Margaret Rudder was a very special friend of mine and General Rudder, and his Rangers’ brave leadership played a pivotal role in defeating Nazi Germany in World War II.”

Background: Just 6 years ago, experts predicted Pointe du Hoc would fall into the sea due to wind and sea erosion. Experts testified before Edwards' committee that preserving the site from wind and coastal erosion was not "practical". Congressman Edwards disagreed and felt strongly that Pointe du Hoc needed to be saved for future generations. Edwards secured \$300,000 to begin initial studies at Pointe du Hoc in 2005 and \$500,000 in 2006 when he also announced that the ABMC had selected Texas A&M's Center for Heritage Conservation at the College of Architecture to perform initial studies, record its history and recommend how to stabilize and preserve the site. Edwards supported Texas A&M's application to head the project, coordinating letters of support to the ABMC from the U.S. Army Rangers and the Rudder family. The study confirmed that Pointe du Hoc could, in fact, be saved.

Edwards then used his position as Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, which funds the American Battle Monument Commission, to add \$6 million for work to stop erosion at the base of the cliff and ensure the bunker's stability based on recommendations made Texas A&M engineers. ABMC will also utilize \$2.5 million to enhance the visitor center and build a walking tour of the battle site keeping intact its unique history once preservation is complete.

The bunker and monument at Pointe du Hoc have been closed to the public since March 2001 due to dangers posed by 60 years of coastal and wind erosion. Without action, the historic cliff was destined to fall into the English Channel. After years of research and engineering conducted by Texas A&M's Center for Heritage Conservation and ABMC funded by Edwards, cliff stabilization construction got underway at Pointe du Hoc recently following an agreement with the French government.

The bunker and monument is targeted to reopen to the public in September 2010 so the world can once again experience the unique history of this sacred site. A formal ribbon cutting

ceremony will be held on June 6, 2011 to commemorate the reopening of the monument.

Timeline:

- 2005-2006: Edwards secured funds for ABMC to begin study of site.
- 2006: Edwards recommended TAMU to ABMC. TAMU awarded ABMC contract to complete study and make recommendations to preserve site.
- Dec. 2007: TAMU researchers first briefed French government about preservation efforts, environmental sensitivity.
- July 2008: TAMU final report completed. TAMU study showed that initial field work needed to continue and best way to stabilize bunker and reopen the site to public was to fill the cavities at the base of the cliff and insert micro-pile supports for the bunker.
- Sept. 2008: Edwards secures \$6 million in ABMC budget for stabilization and preservation efforts at Pointe du Hoc
- May 2009: Construction permit requested.
- Dec 2009: French Government agreement. Award of construction contract
- Jan. 2010: Construction permit received.
- Feb. 2010: Construction begins
- Sept. 2010: Targeted completion of stabilization efforts, interpretation of site and improvements to visitors' center ongoing.
- June 6, 2011: Formal ribbon cutting ceremony will be held to commemorate the reopening of the monument

President Ronald Reagan, in a speech given at Pointe du Hoc on the 40th Anniversary of the D-Day invasion, said, "We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. The air is soft, but 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, and the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon. At dawn, on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that some of the mightiest of these guns were here and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

"The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers -- the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machineguns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe. Two hundred and twenty-five came here. After 2 days of fighting, only 90 could still bear arms.

"Behind me is a memorial that symbolizes the Ranger daggers that were thrust into the top of these cliffs. And before me are the men who put them there.

"These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war. Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender's poem. You are men who in your lives fought for life . . . and left the vivid air signed with your honor."

Photos of Pointe du Hoc available upon request.